

## The Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy, Innovation Fund, Call for applications, Round 4 (2026)

### About CITP

The [Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy \(CITP\)](#) is the first Centre dedicated to trade policy to be funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The Centre is built on the precept that trade policy should be inclusive in both policy formulation and outcome and comprises researchers and external partners across the UK. Formulating an effective trade policy that delivers something for all parts of society requires an evidence-based interdisciplinary approach, founded on consolidated and independent research expertise, which the Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy aims to provide.

Led by University of Sussex, CITP has teams based in Nottingham, Strathclyde, Queen's University Belfast, Cardiff University, Cambridge, EUI, Georgetown, Tel Aviv and UC Berkeley. CITP has been established with an investment from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of £8 million and from its member institutions of nearly £4 million for the period between 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2022 – 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2027.

The CITP aims to equip the UK with the capability to formulate and implement a trade policy tailored to the needs of the whole of the UK by developing a community of scholars and practitioners with the knowledge, skills and mutual understanding to develop robust trade policy in a changing world.

### Innovation Fund

The CITP Innovation Fund is designed to support innovative research projects on inclusive trade policy.

[We will fund...](#)

- Research projects that advance our understanding of inclusive trade policy, and could include **theoretical work, methodological innovation and emerging empirical developments**. Interdisciplinary research is encouraged.
- Research projects proposed and led by Early Career Researchers or in which the professional development of Early Career Researchers is a major part.
- Research projects that develop and sustain **strong partnerships with partners** in academia, the private, third and public sectors.
- Projects that relate to and complement the existing [core research programme](#) and that fit the general guidance (outlined below).

Funding in Round 4 is available for projects which cost **between £10,000 to £40,000 fEC**. *We strongly encourage smaller applications of around £20,000 as we are very limited in the number of large applications that can be awarded.* Projects must be costed at 100% full economic cost (fEC) and will be funded at 80% fEC, according to UKRI guidelines.

The fund is open to the academic community across the UK (though partners may be based elsewhere). It is designed to fund research projects to a value of £400,000 over the life of the CITP research centre (2022-2027). Given that the budget is limited, we would ask applicants to carefully consider the amount of PI and Co-I time included in your budget.

## Eligibility

- Funds can only be awarded to a recognised research organisation (RO), not a person. Guidance on organisations eligible to apply for funding can be found on the ESRC website: [Check if you are eligible for research and innovation funding – UKRI](#). This includes a list of independent research organisations (IROs) and other organisations eligible to apply.
- Principal Investigator (PI):
  - Only one person on the application can be named as Principal Investigator (PI).
  - The PI must be employed by their UK research organisation, with a contract of employment that does not end before the proposed IF project ends.
  - Applicants must have a letter of support from their Head of Department (or equivalent) to confirm their institutional support for the IF application.
  - We are keen to encourage a diverse range of applicants as named PIs, including Early Career Researchers and PhD students and expect senior applicants to include a strong capacity building element of junior staff in their application.
  - A PI can only submit one application to the Innovation Fund (per round), but can be Co-I on other applications
- Organisations outside the UK are not eligible to apply to lead an IF application. They are, however, eligible to be included as project partners (who would be expected to make a contribution, either financially or in-kind), Co-investigators or Consultants: please note, overseas consultants cannot be named as Co-investigators. Please see the [ESRC guidance on Co-investigators from outside the UK](#) and the 'Funding' section of this document regarding costings for international Co-investigators. Note that the CITP will only fund at 80% FEC, including for International Co-Is.
- Collaborations with external organisations, such as businesses, public service organisations, third sector organisations, etc. are encouraged. Non-academic applicants can also co-lead projects. Third sector, government and businesses can be included for up to 30% of the budget (at full economic costing), but a justification will be needed. It would not be expected that large businesses would be justifiable, but charities/NGOs could.
- We are not able to fund PhD studentships or Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs).
- Awards funded through the CITP Innovation Fund should follow UKRI's standard funding rules, [terms and conditions](#) and align with the [ESRC's research funding guide](#). Please note, however, that all correspondence should come to CITP.
- Those directly involved in CITP (including CITP Advisory Board members) are not eligible to be PI or Co-I of any Innovation Fund (IF) applications but they can be included as a part of an IF applicant's Project Team.

## Requirements and stipulations

- The focus of the project should have direct relevance to [CITP research](#) objectives.
- Applications should be social science-focused, but interdisciplinary approaches are also encouraged.
- All resulting data will be deposited to the UK Data Service, as per CITP policies.
- Projects will be funded for a maximum of 12 months duration.
- Due to the CITP funding timeframe, extensions are unlikely to be feasible and must end by January 31st 2027 at the latest.
- In addition to meeting our monitoring and reporting requirements (see below), successful applicants must be willing to participate in CITP future events or meetings, particularly for the purpose of sharing experience and capacity building.

- The information and applications of those who are funded through the Innovation Fund may be shared with relevant organisations, e.g. ESRC and other members of CITP.
- Please ensure that you engage and consult fully with any partners involved, in order that the permissions and costings are collaborative before applications are made. You may need to consult the processes of your own institution, as collaboration with some partners may have specific requirements.

If successful, you should:

- undertake a risk assessment as per your institution's requirements.
- adhere to data protection and GDPR guidelines
- adhere to the UKRI's guidelines and procedures on research integrity, according to the [UKRI policy on the governance of good research practice](#), as well as your institution's – and the [ESRC's](#) - ethics policies and procedures
- adhere to the procurement policies for the lead RO for the project and to ESRC requirements in their [Research Funding Guide](#)

## Funding

All projects must be costed at their full economic costing (fEC), that is 100% of costs. Projects will be awarded at 80% fEC, according to UKRI funding rules.

Panel members will be given the discretion to make awards and apply conditions, which means funding awards may differ from the amount requested.

Information regarding costing Co-Is from outside the UK, a UK business, the third sector or a government body can be found in the ESRC's [Research Funding Guide](#). Please note: the combined costs for *Co-Is* from outside the UK, or from UK business, third sector and government bodies must not exceed 30% of the total fEC of the grant application. Non-academic, non-UK investigators involved as *project team members* must bring their own funds. Further information on eligible costs can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

**Please note:** we are not using the joint electronic submission system (Je-S) so the details on ESRC guidance documents do not directly apply. All funding awarded will be received via one of the Universities of Sussex, Nottingham and Strathclyde, not directly from the ESRC. Financial reporting information will be collected by CITP according to the requirements of CITP and the institution providing the funding.

## Eligible & ineligible costs

The following is a list of eligible and ineligible costs for the CITP Innovation Fund.

**Eligible costs include:**

- Travel & subsistence
- Estate and indirect costs for UK HEIs
- Research expenses & consumables, e.g. participant reimbursement for time; transcription fees; access to datasets; consumables related to surveys or other data collection, books; etc.
- Expenses related to engagement with external stakeholders
- Costs associated with engagement and dissemination events
- Research assistant costs
- Sub-contracted or consultancy costs, if necessary
- PI / Co-I time
- Conference attendance (any conference-related costs must be proportional to the overall budget)

**Ineligible costs include:**

- Overheads for UK businesses and government bodies
- Funds cannot be used to purchase items of equipment worth £10,000 (including VAT) or more, nor for items that would normally be expected for applicants to provide (e.g. computer hardware including laptops, electronic notebooks, digital cameras, software, etc.)
- Article publication costs (as per the ESRC [Research Funding Guide](#) regarding [open access](#))

If you are in doubt about an item, please contact [info@citp.ac.uk](mailto:info@citp.ac.uk) prior to your submission.

## Assessment of the Innovation Fund applications

Applications will be assessed according to:

1. Aims, objectives, project rationale and contribution to CITP
2. Research design & methods, including the extent of innovation
3. Deliverables & Impact Plan
4. Appropriate expertise of the team's project management skills (PI and partners). If the PI is an ECR there will need to be suitable experienced mentoring in place.
5. Capacity building, e.g. through the involvement of ECR and/or PhD students in the project.
5. Value for money

Applications will enter a 2-stage evaluation process:

*Review* – Reviewers will be allocated applications according to expertise and outside of their home institution. They will score each item above on a scale of 1-5. Each reviewer will also be asked to comment on each application in terms of the major strengths, weaknesses, and whether the weaknesses are sufficient to prevent the proposal from being funded.

*Panel* – The evaluation panel consists of an independent chair, members of the CITP Leadership Team and a representative from the ESRC as an observer.

The application process aims to ensure maximum equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Peer Reviewers will be required to follow the [University of Sussex Equality & Diversity policy](#) by ensuring that applicants are assessed solely against the guidelines, and not according to “age, disability, gender reassignment or trans identity, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, trade union membership or non-membership, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction”.

Applicants should ensure applications are written, so far as possible, in non-technical language as they will not necessarily be evaluated by experts in a particular field.

## Monitoring and Reporting

Successful applicants will be required to

- Deliver a presentation of the work at a CITP seminar
- Submit a draft Working Paper to be published in the CITP WP series by the end of the funding
- Write a CITP Briefing Paper
- Provide a blog contribution based on the funded research, if appropriate
- Provide a mid-project report or have a review meeting with a CITP mentor
- Submit a final narrative report at the end of the project which must be accompanied by a financial report.



- Follow-up reports will be requested after the funding has ended to ensure we can capture outputs to feedback to ESRC.

The CITP will report the relevant findings from all successful awards to the ESRC.

All awards will be announced on the [CITP website](#)

## Key dates

Call opens: **Tuesday 1st July 2025**

Application closing date: **Monday 29th September, by 12 noon, UK time**

The decision to applicants by: **Monday 27th October**

## How to apply

The Application Form is available to download from our website.

Please send the completed application form *and a 2-page summary CV for each team member, including lead applicants* by **Monday 29th September, by 12 noon, UK time** to:

info@citp.ac.uk